

PASSPORT TO ARGENTINA

American Citizen Services Newsletter

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Issue 6



U.S. Embassy
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Consular Staff Tours Buenos Aires Cruise Port



Cruise ship *Splendour of the Seas* of Royal Caribbean International docked in the Port of Buenos Aires

On February 4th, U.S. Embassy consular staff members toured the Port of Buenos Aires as part of an ongoing effort to monitor the safety of American citizen travelers in Buenos Aires. For the past five cruise seasons, U.S. citizens have represented the largest segment of Buenos Aires cruise passengers by nationality. Twenty-25 percent of passengers each year are U.S. passport holders. The port has historically been an area prone to higher rates of pick pocketing and passport theft, and American Citizen Services dispatched its team to see the overall port logistics. Buenos Aires Port Superintendent Pablo Hawkins and Tourist Police Vice Chief Javier Meregalli escorted the consular staff through the passenger terminal and each subsequent point in the process of embarkation and debarkation.

Superintendent Hawkins showed the team the modernized bag and passenger screening area, while Tourist Police Vice Chief Meregalli elaborated on the Port Authority procedures to ensure the safety of the traveling public and guard the port against all threats. The team was then shuttled to the boarding ramps of the various cruise ships in port. Finally they were taken back to the arrivals and immigrations area of the terminal, completing their journey in the footsteps of a Buenos Aires cruise passenger.

Consul General's Corner

I hope all of you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season and that your new year is starting to be a great one. I can hardly believe that we're already in February of 2009. Many children have returned to school from summer vacation and U.S. citizen exchange students are arriving in Argentina in droves. Our consular section has been busy with many cases involving emergency assistance to Americans and record numbers of Argentines are seeking visas to travel to the United States.



Consul General Noronha with U.S. citizen voter Jack McLeod on Voting Day

Unfortunately, our American Citizen Services staff had the sad job of assisting the families of 12 deceased Americans in January, a record number of deaths for a single month. No one ever wants to discuss death or illness, but since our travels take us far from home, we should prepare for the worst. As most of you already know, if you are in Argentina and require medical attention, you will have to choose either a public or private hospital. At a public hospital, service is provided free of charge, but the exact service or test you require may not always be available. Private hospitals require payment for services rendered and most will require you to pay for services up front and seek later reimbursement from your health insurance company. Remember too that Medicare does not provide coverage overseas. Therefore, it pays to check with your insurance company before embarking on your trip to determine what coverage, if any, is available overseas.

In addition, if you require continuing medical care and wish to be medically evacuated to the United States, the cost of transportation via a specially-equipped plane with medical personnel in attendance costs about \$100,000 U.S. dollars. Most health insurance carriers do not cover medical evacuations, so do consider purchasing additional traveler's insurance before leaving home. And if home for you is Argentina, please encourage visiting friends and families to review their health insurance policies and consider whether travelers insurance would provide them peace of mind. Another important task for travelers is to write emergency contact information on the designated page of their passport. It's also important to include this critical information on your passport application, which in an emergency can be accessed by every U.S. Embassy in the world.

Lastly, let me formally introduce you to "Passport to Argentina." We couldn't have produced it without the talent of Juan Martin Barcia, graphic artist in the Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section. Please send us your comments and questions about our news and our new look to BuenosAires-ACS@state.gov. We love to hear from you.

Jennifer Noronha
Consul General
U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires

Citizen Services Central

It's That Time of the Year Again...

2009 tax season is upon us. As a result of budget cuts, an IRS representative will not be at the Embassy this year. However, to ease your tax headaches, ACS does maintain a list of accountants in Buenos Aires, so please email BuenosAires-ACS@state.gov if you would like the list. ACS has IRS international taxpayer informational brochures available for pick-up. The IRS also has additional tax filing tips on their website: www.irs.gov.



Proposed Tourist Entry Fee Postponed



In late 2008, Argentina announced it would collect a reciprocal entry fee from nationals of all countries that charge Argentines visa or entry fees. For U.S. tourists, this would mean USD \$131. Implementation, which had been slated for March 2009, has been postponed. American Citizen Services will notify the traveling U.S. public of developments through this newsletter, warden messages and updates to the Country Specific Information sheet found on www.travel.state.gov.

Going Hunting?

Argentina has recently changed its laws regarding transporting hunting equipment and exporting hunting trophies.

- When you arrive in Argentina, you must register your firearm and apply for a provincial hunting license at the location of the hunt.
- To transport wildlife trophies or hunting equipment inside Argentina, you will need a hunting license and a provincial permit.
- To take hunting equipment and/or trophies out of Argentina, you must obtain an export certificate, health certificate and a special certificate (CITES).
- For more firearm-related information:
 - RENAR: Registro Nacional de Armas
www.renar.gov.ar. 54-11-4371-8989
- For more information on export of trophies:
 - Direccion de Fauna Silvestre
www.amibente.gov.ar. 54-11-4348-8531





The Embassy now has its very own Facebook page, and it can be accessed through the Facebook link on the Embassy web site:

www.argentina.usembassy.gov



Please register with the Embassy and encourage your friends and family to review our Country Specific Information sheet on Argentina that can be found at:

www.travel.state.gov

Your Embassy in Action

Embassy Volunteers Lend a Helping Hand at Banco de Alimentos

In response to President-elect Barack Obama and General Colin Powell's national call to service on Martin Luther King Day, numerous Buenos Aires Embassy employees assisted Banco de Alimentos in processing food donations. This organization distributes food to various soup kitchens throughout Buenos Aires that serve more than 69,000 people. Certainly this partnership with Banco Alimentos will grow throughout 2009 as we schedule additional visits to lend a helping hand. For more information about Banco de Alimentos, please contact Stella Santucci at 15-4411-3263.



Your Personal Security

The Embassy would like to remind all that U.S. Government facilities worldwide remain at a heightened state of alert. These facilities may temporarily close or periodically suspend public services to assess their security posture. In those instances, U.S. embassies and consulates will make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. Americans abroad are urged to monitor the local news and maintain contact with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

In Argentina specifically, the Embassy would like to stress that street crime in the larger cities, especially greater Buenos Aires and Mendoza, is a problem for residents and visitors alike. As in any big city, visitors to Buenos Aires and popular tourist destinations should be alert to:

- Muggers
- Pickpockets
- Scam artists
- Purse-snatchers



These incidents occur on the street, in hotel lobbies, at bus and train stations, and in cruise-ship ports. Criminals employ a variety of ruses to distract and victimize unsuspecting visitors, and usually work in groups and travelers should assume they are armed.

Ambassador Wayne Reaches Out To Argentine Special Olympics Team



Ambassador Wayne received on January 28 a delegation of athletes that represented Argentina at the Special Winter Olympic Games in Boise, Idaho, on February 7-13. The group of 21 athletes, 11 to 46 years old, visited the Embassy with their teachers and coaches to get their visas and talk with Ambassador Wayne. "I congratulate you on your achievements in sports and life,"

the Ambassador told them. More than 2,700 athletes participated last year in the local, regional, and national tournaments that classified the 21 athletes that will represent Argentina. They participated in several field hockey and ski competitions. "The work done by NGO Nuevas Olimpiadas Especiales is fantastic, and deserves all our admiration and support," said the Ambassador.

Embassy Donates to Madres Del Paco Childcare Center

Ambassador Wayne and Colonel Edwin Passmore, Commander, United States Military Group visited on February 5 a childcare center run by Madres Contra el Paco leader Maria Rosa Gonzalez to donate a stove, child-sized tables, chairs, plates and utensils. The funds for the donation came from the U.S. Embassy's Military Group humanitarian assistance



program. "The U.S. Embassy is proud to partner with such courageous women who work to make the future for the children of Ciudad Oculta brighter," said Ambassador Wayne at the donation ceremony. "Maria Rosa Gonzalez and the Madres Contra el Paco have dedicated themselves to saving the lives of their children from the dangers of Paco. We have worked with Maria Rosa and the mothers for more than a year. Maria Rosa has worked for eight months to build this care center for the children of Ciudad Oculta. Many of the children who spend time at the center are children of Paco addicts. The center provides these children with healthy activities to prevent them from following the same path. Our donation is a small gesture of our support for the important work undertaken by the Madres Contra el Paco every day," said the Ambassador. "I thank Ambassador Wayne and the Embassy's support since I received the 'International Woman of Courage' award. The donation helps us provide better care to the children of Ciudad Oculta, who deserve an opportunity to live healthy and free from drugs," said Maria Rosa Gonzalez.

Advice Corner & FAQs on Your Passport Application



Travel Reminder:

If you have a spouse, family member or friend traveling to the United States using a passport from a Visa Waiver Program (VWP) country, he/she is now required to register electronically online before traveling.

This electronic registration process and other information about visa waiver travel can be found at:

www.cbp.gov/esta

VWP travelers should also ensure that their passports meet U.S. requirements for participation in the program.

The American Citizens Services Unit processes your requests for issuance, renewal and replacement of your passports. We only handle these cases by appointment unless it is an emergency replacement. Here are answers to a few questions we frequently receive:

- Q. How do I apply for a passport?
A. Please follow the procedure outlined in the Citizen Services Section of our website: www.argentina.usembassy.gov
- Q. How long will the process take?
A. Once you receive your appointment and come into to the Embassy, we try to speed you through the application process. If you fill your application out through our website and print it out, we can scan the barcode on your application form. This will reduce your waiting time in the Consular Section.
- Q. How long will it take for me to get my new passport?
A. Your new passport is printed in New Orleans, Louisiana. You can expect to receive it ten to 14 calendar days after you apply. After you complete your application in ACS, you will stop by the DHL courier service window at the Embassy to arrange passport delivery.
- Q. What if I have to travel immediately?
A. We do ask that you keep your travel dates in mind and allow adequate time for processing your new passport. However, if you have an emergency and must travel, you may qualify to receive an emergency passport. Emergency passports are issued the same day and valid for only one year.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at BuenosAires-ACS@state.gov or during business hours, we can be reached at 011-5777-4387.



CONSULAR OFFICERS VISIT CORDOBA & MENDOZA

ACS Hours and Upcoming Embassy Holidays

Our Hours:

The American Citizen Services Office is open to the public from Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to noon and 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. excluding U.S. and Argentine holidays and administrative days below.

Upcoming holidays:

March 19 and 24, April 2 and 10, May 1 and 25.

Upcoming administrative days: March 4, April 1, May 6.



Tourism sector representatives, students and education specialists in the city of Cordoba received information about consular services for American citizens and student visas in U.S. Embassy events on December 4 and 5, 2008. Consul Rosemary Macray and Special Consular Services Assistant Gaston Marano joined representatives of the Cordoba Tourism Office and Interior Ministry in the city's beautiful Paseo del Buen Pastor on December 5 to present "Argentina: Un Lugar para Volver." The program focused on how consular officials in the Embassy can collaborate with Cordoba governmental officials and tourism industry representatives to ensure that U.S. citizens enjoy their visits to the province and leave Argentina anxious to return. On December 4, Consul Macray explained procedures for obtaining student and exchange program visas at an event hosted by Cordoba's IICANA Bi-National Center. During the visit, the consular team also provided passport services to U.S. citizens residing in Cordoba.

On December 11 and 12, the American Citizens Services team held two days of events in the city of Mendoza. The activities kicked off with an informative student visa presentation at the AMICANA office on December 11. Prospective students and their parents attended the presentation and enthusiastically engaged in the dialogue about opportunities to study in the United States. On December 12, representatives of the Mendoza Secretary of Tourism and Tourist Police joined the consular team to address hotel and tourism operators at the Bolsa de Comercio in another session of "Argentina: Un Lugar para Volver." The consular team also provided passport services to U.S. citizens residing in Mendoza.